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ABSTRACT

This document describes the East Caroline Islands lying in the Ponape District and the development of a Teacher Corps inservice program to aid public school teachers in professional development. Program objectives were to: (1) up-grade basic and professional skills of Micronesian interns; (2) implement a University Without Walls baccalaureate program in the Trust Territory for Micronesians; (3) demonstrate a model for teacher training which could be implemented in other parts of Micronesia; (4) utilize and support the teacher education programs at the Community College of Micronesia; and (5) develop culturally relevant teacher training curriculum materials. The project also sought to combine three elements into its degree process: academic, inservice, and community. The program dealt with instruction in Generic Teaching Skills, Interactional Analysis, English Improvement, Mathematics Improvement, Social Studies Methods, Lesson Planning, Evaluation, and Community Education. This instruction, in conjunction with course work at the Community College of Micronesia, previous course work at other colleges, and documentation of previous work and life experiences, comprise the total degree plan of each intern. Upon completion the intern receives a Bachelor of Science Degree with special emphasis on teacher training. (MJB)

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# TEACHER CORPS GOES INTERNATIONAL
# THE MICRONESIA/PONAPE EXPERIENCE

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FREDERICK J. BAKER

## TEACHER CORPS BACKGROUND

The Teacher Corps, established by Congress in 1965, is a nationwide effort to provide to children from low-income families better educational opportunities and to improve the quality of teacher education programs for both inexperienced interns and certified teachers. It offers schools in low-income areas, their communities and universities, the change to operate innovative two-year programs for better utilization of teachers.

Teacher Corps was created by Title V-B of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This Act states that the purpose of Teacher Corps is:

to strengthen the educational opportunities available to children in areas having concentrations of low-income families,

to encourage colleges and universities to broaden their programs of teacher preparation, and

to encourage institutions of higher education and local educational agencies to improve programs of training and retraining for teachers.

Teacher Corps projects serve close to 200 school districts, prisons, and juvenile institutions. Teacher Corps interns study in almost 100 different universities in over 30 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, the District of Columbia, and now Ponape, East Caroline Islands.

## MICRO WHAT?

As a way of explaining the geographical and social situation in Micronesia, the following is a quotation from a statement made by David Ramarui, Director of Education for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands:

"... try to imagine what it would be like if we were to flood the entire continental United States with water and have only a couple of thousand mountain peaks and hilltops above the level of the water. We would have wiped out all the railroads, all of the radio and TV networks.

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"Now let us in our imagination pick out about 100 of the larger hilltops and settle them with people, clustering 7,000 in the Los Angeles area speaking French; 2,500 in the Reno area speaking German; 12,000 in the Fargo area speaking Spanish; 9,000 in the Kansas City area speaking Japanese; 10,000 in the Indianapolis area speaking Greek; and 10,000 in the Washington, D.C. area speaking Russian. On the hilltops in between scatter another 65,000 people speaking Dutch, Chinese and Turkish.

"Now, by way of giving these people a common language try to teach them all English as a second language. By way of helping these people travel from place to place on six of the hilltops scratch out short dirt runways and put in a two-airplane airline. Then toss in about a dozen small tramp steamers to go between the smaller islands. And for the communication system between those six major population centers install a one-channel radio telephone system, and put in each a low-powered public radio station. Finally, move this whole area to the far western Pacific just above the equator with its capital about as far away from Washington, D.C. as Bombay, India is."

PONAPE DISTRICT

Ponape is one of six districts which make up the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. It is made up of one high island (Ponape) and eight atolls (Oroluk, Pakin, Ant, Mokil, Pingelap, Ngatik, Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi), one of which (Oroluk) is uninhibited now. The total land area is about 162 square miles scattered over 170,000 square miles of ocean from the equator to 12 North latitude and between 154 and 166 East longitude.

The people (population 25,482 as of the 1975 census) are Micronesians with the exception of the Nukuorans and the Kapingamarangians, who are Polynesians. There are several languages spoken in the district: Ponapean, Kusaiean, Mortlockese (spoken by the nearly 2,000 immigrants from the Mortlocks), Ponapean dialects of Ngatik, Mokil, and Pingelap, plus two Polynesian languages spoken by the Nukuorans and Kapingamarangians. Religiously, the population is divided principally between Catholicism and Congregational Protestantism with smaller recently established Jehovahs Witness and Seventh Day Adventist Missions, Assembly of God, and Baha'i.

The economy is one of predominantly subsistance fishing and farming, supplemented by copra manufacture for export. Rice, cacao, vegetables and pepper are also produced Handicraft production is a growing industry. Still, the largest source of income is government employment.

The land is dominated by man-controlled vegetation, except on the high mountains of Ponape. Generally it consists of coconut, breadfruit, and banana trees, intermixed and in pure stands, or of a half-dozen secondary forest trees forming a low and often open forest.

There are 18 species of land and freshwater birds and over 20 kinds of sea birds which dominate the animal wildlife on Ponape. There are also rats and deer, along with Native fruit and insectivorous bats (the only native land mammals).

## PONAPE ISLAND

The total land area of Ponape Island is 117 square miles, 113 of which make up the main island. The remaining 4 square miles are divided among the approximately 39 islands and inlets on and within the surrounding reef. Additionally, there are about 21 square miles of mangrove fringing the island.

The surrounding reef is pentagonally shaped and encloses a narrow lagoon, except in the southeast corner of the island, where the reef fringes the land and there is no lagoon. Intricate patterns of reef growth in the lagoon can make boat travel difficult, except at high tides, when outboard motorboats can ride above the reefs. Permanent markers show the main channels around most of the island.

Ponape Island is a classic shield-shaped volcano which has been dissected by erosion and increased by reef growth. Its rugged central mountains form a system of ridges separated by long, deep valleys, many of which widen greatly near the sea. The principal rivers lie to the north, east, and south. Over 17 of the mountain peaks rise above 500 meters and the highest, Ngihneni, reaches to 782 meters (2,566 feet). Nahna Laud ("Big Mountain") is popularly considered the highest point.

Originally, almost all of Ponape was clothed with forest, rising to 100 feet in favorable locations, and composed of over 600 species of higher plants, plus a rich group of mosses and similar plants. At high altitudes, frequent cloud contact produces mossy forests with stunted trees and a green carpeting of all the land, rocks, and tree trunks. In these areas particularly, many of the plants are unique to Ponape.

Man has altered the vegetation of most of the lowlands by replacing the forest trees with economic crops, most notably coconut, breadfruit, and banana trees with taro in swampy areas. Even the mangrove swamp, which fringes the land, is modified by intermittent cutting.

## WHY TEACHER CORPS?

Of particular concern is the quality of education in the elementary schools on Ponape. As of May, 1975 none of the 253 Ponapean elementary school teachers had a Master's degree or bachelor's degree, only 13% had an Associate's degree, 85% had a high school education and 2% had less than a high school education.

LIFETIME BOND
50% COTTON FIBER

Given the substandard education received by these teachers in the elementary schools of Ponape, it is not surprising that teaching ability is at a low level. However, the low level of formal teacher education is only one of the factors inhibiting teacher performance. For all teachers on Ponape, English is a second language, and for many it is a third or even a fourth language. Yet English is the mandated common language of Ponape and its schools.

Even with all of these problems, interest in professional improvement among Micronesian/Ponapean teachers is high. Workshops and summer training sessions are well attended, and when professionally done are enthusiastically received. Personal sacrifices such as extended separation from home and family for the sake of further education are frequently borne. There is also a keen awareness on the part of all educational administrators for the need of a strong inservice teacher education program. To support this awareness the Ponape District Department of Education has declared teacher education as one of the prime goals for the Department. In order to facilitate this goal the needs had to be articulated and specified in order to develop and implement the best possible program.

This articulation took place when the Far West Laboratory for Research and Development in San Francisco, California instituted the first Teacher Corps, Micronesia/Ponape proposal. Upon its successful funding five interns from the island of Ponape were selected and staff was brought on during the summer of 1975. The Teacher Corps/Ponape project endeavored to bring together the resources of an Institution of Higher Education, a Local Educational Agency, and the immediate community. In this program the institution is the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities with central offices in Yellow Springs, Ohio; the local agency is the District Department of Education located in Kolonia on the island of Ponape and the community is a composite of all residents and institutions on Ponape Island.

To these resources were added the Far West Laboratory (the first year) and East Los Angeles College (the second year) in order to provide technical support in those areas necessary to complete program objectives. Rounding out the project found the involvement of the Community College of Micronesia and the Trust Territory Headquarters Department of Education on Saipan.

## OBJECTIVES

The five interns from the island of Ponape were to be involved in a process that would 1) up-grade basic and professional skills of Micronesian interns; 2) implement a University Without Walls baccalaureate program in the Trust Territory for Micronesians; 3) demonstrate a model for teacher training which could be implemented in other parts of Micronesia; 4) utilize and support the teacher education programs at the Community College of Micronesia; and 5) develop culturally relevant teacher training curriculum materials.

## UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS MODEL

In the first year of the project the interns were to become fully acquainted with the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities' University Without Walls process; how a program is organized, how it works and how it is documented. With the assistance of the project staff, the interns were to set individual goals and degree objectives based on identified baccalaureate level competencies and design a University Without Walls program to meet those goals and objectives. As part of the degree program each intern was to organize a demonstration site which would serve to retrain inservice teachers. During the second year the interns were to continue to work toward their individually identified degree goals, set up demonstration sites in Ponape elementary schools, write school curriculum and teacher training materials relevant to these sites, and assist inservice teachers in implementing innovations and improved instructional techniques in their classrooms. They were also to assist in the design and implementation and improved instructional techniques in their classrooms. They were also to assist in the design and implementation of an evaluation process which would assess the effect on children of the retraining of Micronesian teachers. Throughout the two years the interns would be engaged in community-based activities which, with the active participation of parents and and other community members, would encourage, support and develop educational activities for children beyond the regular school programs. To facilitate this process a Project Director from the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, a Program Development Specialist, and an Instructional Specialist from East Los Angeles College were placed on site in Ponape.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Teacher Corps/Micronesia Project combined three elements in its degree process: academic, inservice and community. In order to begin this program an on-going degree building process was instituted by interns during the first months of the project. A series of in-depth meetings were held with interns both collectively and individually. Each meeting dealt with a broad range of needs. An inservice survey and a community survey were also conducted in order to add valuable information for achieving program objectives. The basic content areas of these survey forms included attitudinal change, knowledge of basic teaching skills and interest in additional training or new training. The basic interest groups which were surveyed included inservice teachers, administrators, and parents.

The Teacher Corps staff identified target schools on the island of Ponape for the dissemination of the needs assessment. The staff attempted to select target schools which represented a cross section of the ethnic breakdown of Ponape Island. A total of thirteen schools were selected. Special meetings were arranged at these target schools. In addition, several village meetings were also held as well as home visitations by the interns. A field-based program was then developed and is currently being implemented with focuses on the major concerns expressed in the needs assessment.

Working from these assessments the project staff transferred the local needs to actual behavioral tasks. Included in the schema were the areas of human experience projected into the basic skill areas for teaching. From these basic skill areas, general proficiencies were determined. The most important area then followed: the specific instructional competencies.

An evolving paradigm consisted of methods, skills and professional participants. The methods domain consisted of inservice workshops, demonstrations, field practice, simulations, Community College of Micronesia courses, and community education. The skills, taken directly from the schema, included individual attitudes, human relations, and strategies. The spectrum of the paradigm included elementary inservice teachers, administrators, teacher training staff and parents.

A series of Learning Contracts have then been developed to support intern degree objectives and provide for continuous inservice education of teachers. Specifically, the learning contracts are designed to deal with Generic Teaching Skills, Interactional Analysis, English Improvement, Mathematics Improvement, Social Studies Methods, Lesson Planning, Evaluation and Community Education. These contracts, in conjunction with course work at the Community College of Micronesia, previous course work at other colleges, and documentation of previous work and life experiences comprise the total degree plan of each intern. Upon completion the intern will receive a Bachelor of Science Degree with special emphasis on Teaching Training.

## THE FUTURE OF TEACHER TRAINING IN MICRONESIA

Micronesians have asked for a continuation of Teacher Corps projects in the Trust Territory. They have been especially excited about a process that enables them to create individualized programs without having to leave their homes to obtain advanced degrees. Field-based instruction is also a new concept that has received considerable support. Teacher Corps is recognized as a leader in the Competency-Based teacher education movement and has been asked to implement a program for the entire six districts of Micronesia. Hopefully a new project will build upon the successes and failures of Teacher Corps/Ponape in order to disseminate a program of relevant teacher training for the while of the Trust Territory.